

Guidance

Air quality

Provides guidance on how planning can take account of the impact of new development on air quality.

From:

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) and [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#)

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1 November 2019: This guidance has been updated - see [previous version](#).

Where plans are being prepared under the transitional arrangements set out in Annex 1 to the revised [National Planning Policy Framework](#), the policies in the [previous version of the framework published in 2012](#) will continue to apply, as will any previous guidance which has been superseded since the new framework was published in July 2018. If you'd like an email alert when chadeTE(nc)-6.re em tig()JEMC ET/Artifa

prepare an air quality action plan. This identifies measures that will be introduced in pursuit of the objectives and can have implications for planning.

Air quality considerations may also be relevant to obligations and policies relating to the conservation of nationally and internationally important habitats and species. The [Air Pollution Information System](#) and Natural England's 'Impact Risk Zones' tool (available on [MAGIC](#)) can help to determine the types of development proposal which can adversely affect these designated sites of special scientific interest and indicates when consultation with Natural England is required.

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- what are the observed trends shown by recent air quality monitoring data and what would happen to these trends in light of proposed development and / or allocations;
- the impact of point sources of air pollution (pollution that originates from one place);
- the potential cumulative impact of a number of smaller developments on air quality as well as the effect of more

might affect potential policies and proposals that are being considered.

Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 32-003-20191101

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What information is available about air quality?

In addition to the information on local air quality held by environmental health departments in local authorities, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs publishes information and there is a range of other potential sources which can be drawn on, depending on the development and its proposed location.

Information published by Defra

- the [UK Air Information Resource \(UK-AIR\)](#), which contains information on historic and current air quality across the UK, including a [GIS portal](#) of Defra's national assessment against relevant Limit Values and air quality management areas;
- [air quality management area records](#) and [modelled background pollution concentrations](#);
- the [National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) for emissions of air pollution including maps at a 1km by 1km resolution for a wide range of pollutants;
- the [Pollutant and Release Transfer Register](#), which has links to emissions from installations permitted under the Environmental Permitting Regulations, which is useful for point sources;
- the [Clean Air Strategy](#) sets out actions for dealing with 5 major sources of air pollution. A detailed [National Air Pollution Control Programme](#) was published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in April 2019.

Other sources of information

- the [Environmental Pollution Incident dataset](#) published by the Environment Agency, which has information about pollution

incidents and [sites](#) registered under the Environmental Permitting Regulations;

- information about the impact of air quality on habitats and species (including critical loads and levels) held by the [Air Pollution Information System](#). This has been developed in partnership by the UK conservation agencies and regulatory agencies and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology;
- the sustainability appraisal or habitats assessment informing strategic planning policies and whether these required an Air Quality Assessment;
- recent environmental statements that may include updated baseline assessments.

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When could air quality considerations be relevant to the development management process?

Whether air quality is relevant to a planning decision will depend on the proposed development and its location. Concerns could arise if the development is likely to have an adverse effect on air quality in areas where it is already known to be poor, particularly if it could affect the implementation of air quality strategies and action plans and/or breach legal obligations (including those relating to the conservation of habitats and species). Air quality may also be a material consideration if the proposed development would be particularly sensitive to poor air quality in its vicinity.

Where air quality is a relevant consideration the local (el)-3.1 (opm)-3.7 (ent)-5 (i)

- whether occupiers or users of the development could experience poor living conditions or health due to poor air quality.

The steps a local planning authority might take in considering air quality are set out in this flow diagram.

[Flowchart](#)

PDF, 105 KB, 1 page

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It is important that applicants [engage](#) early on with the local planning and environmental health departments to establish the need and scope of any assessment to support an application.

For large and complex industrial processes, the Environment Agency should also be consulted at an early stage. For more information, contact the Environment Agency on 07842 72 534 or 121 58486.

What specific issues may need to be considered when assessing air quality impacts?

Considerations that may be relevant to determining a planning application include whether the development would:

- Lead to changes (including any potential reductions) in vehicle-related emissions in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development or further afield. This could be through the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure; altering the level of traffic congestion; significantly changing traffic volumes, vehicle speeds or both; or significantly altering the traffic composition on local roads. Other matters to consider include whether the proposal involves the development of a bus station, coach or lorry park; could add to turnover in a large car park; or involve construction sites that would generate large Heavy Goods Vehicle flows over a period of a year or more;
- Introduce new point sources of air pollution. This could include furnaces which require prior notification to local authorities; biomass boilers or biomass-fuelled Combined Heat and Power plant; centralised boilers or plant burning other fuels within or close to an air quality management area or introduce relevant combustion within a [Smoke Control Area](#); or extraction systems (including chimneys) which require approval or permits under pollution control legislation;
- Expose people to harmful concentrations of air pollutants, including dust. This could be by building new homes, schools, workplaces or other development in places with poor air quality;
- Give rise to potentially unacceptable impacts (such as dust) during construction for nearby sensitive locations;
- Have a potential adverse effect on biodiversity, especially where it would affect sites designated for their biodiversity value.

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How detailed does an air quality assessment need to be?

Assessments need to be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the potential impacts (taking into account existing air quality conditions), and because of this are likely to be

How can an impact on air quality be mitigated?

Mitigation options will need to be locationally specific, will depend on the proposed development and need to be proportionate to the likely impact. It is important that local planning authorities work with applicants to consider appropriate mitigation so as to ensure new development is appropriate for its location and unacceptable risks are prevented. [Planning conditions](#) and

